



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE CONSTITUTIONALIST PARTY IN MEXICO: WHAT IT IS FIGHTING FOR

BY SEÑOR DON ROBERTO V. PESQUEIRA,

Confidential Agent of the Carranza Government in the United States.

It has been stated with much persistency throughout the United States and Europe that the real object of the present revolutionary movement in Mexico is merely to avenge the death of the late President Madero and to restore to power his administration. This fallacy, based entirely upon imperfect information or misconception of the real facts, merits immediate correction, and it is my purpose to accompany it by some words of explanation that may possibly clarify in some degree the general subject under discussion.

The revolution of 1910, led by Madero, was not one inspired by personal ambition or thirst for power. Madero's critics admit that. Even Porfirio Diaz, after the fall of Juarez, reluctantly recognized the movement as one based on economic and social considerations, and of a character so serious as to demand his resignation as president of the republic, indeed, his withdrawal from the country. For thirty years Diaz had ruled Mexico with a tyrannical hand of iron. During that period he granted many valuable and monopolistic concessions to foreigners, and surrounded himself with a group of favorites who were permitted to control affairs of state and barter away the rights of the people, without corresponding benefit to them. Through the construction of railways and the development of other industrial enterprises, however, some prosperity ensued, but such more particularly served to benefit the concessionaires and the already wealthy landowners than the masses, to whose educational and social advancement no thought was given. At the same time while the cost of living rose rapidly, the pay of the wage-worker failed to increase correspondingly, the landed proprietors, sustained always by the government, dictating terms of employment. The tribunals of justice became a mockery, the judges for the most part, corrupt, and supinely obedient to the executive. Diaz himself in violation of his pledge to retire, procured his reelection and settled down, as he thought, to the enjoyment of six years more of power. Smarting under their exploitation by the conservative element and

without the lawful means of redress, the masses began to show signs of discontent, and, indeed, a purpose to resort to arms rather than to submit longer to conditions approximating abject slavery.

Madero and his followers believed that the first step towards practical reform was to limit the tenure of the presidency to one term, since the ills from which the country had so long suffered were manifestly due to the corrupt influences made possible only by the long-continued occupation of the office by General Diaz. With this and real popular suffrage, agrarian reforms could be enacted, and it was believed, the people would forthwith come into their own. But Diaz and his followers gave no heed to repeated warnings. The revolution of 1910 followed. Diaz retired; but before doing so and in order to check the reforms demanded by the people, he effected a compromise by which Francisco De la Barra, then minister of foreign relations, became provisional president, pending an election.

De la Barra, an uncertain character, lacked a positive policy during his *ad interim* administration. As a creature of Diaz, and intimately allied with the aristocracy and the corrupt element of the old régime, he limited himself merely to the discharge of the revolutionary forces, as a method by which he pretended that peace could best be established. On every hand he minimized the purpose and effect of the revolution, and sought to prepare a sentiment in favor of reactionary principles. The same men who surrounded Diaz and urged the continuation of his policies now returned to the country convinced that they were not to be prosecuted, and initiated a campaign against Madero and the aims of the revolution. It was during this period that efforts were made to concentrate public opinion in favor of General Reyes and even De la Barra himself, as candidates for the presidency against Madero. It was also at this time that the Clerical party, which since the downfall of Maximilian had shown no signs of life, was suddenly revived under the name of the Catholic party, and cast its baleful influence in favor of the discredited policies of the past. De la Barra, while he had received the government in trust, to be turned over to the revolution, did all possible to maintain himself in power and to avoid the advent of the new régime, thus demonstrating hostility to Madero personally, as well as to the reforms for which the revolution had been fought and won. Casting aside De la Barra as useless the reactionaries now proceeded along more cunning lines.

Madero once elevated to the presidency by means of a free election, his administration was quickly beset by intrigue and treachery on the part of this group who pretended to be his friends. Protesting an ardent and patriotic desire to forget the past and to cooperate in upholding the new government and its proposed reforms, they did so only to obscure their perfidious purpose of discrediting the latter and to cloak their treasonable intent to overthrow the constitutional chief magistrate. The conspiracy assumed such proportions that Madero, believing as he did in those who pledged their honor to his support, was rendered helpless for the time being in carrying out the program of the revolution. At this moment, with malevolent deception, the conspirators, assisted by a large group of corrupt officers of the army, struck the blow known as the insurrection of the Ciudadela, which offered General Victoriano Huerta, commanding general of the government forces, opportunity treacherously to assume the dictatorship of Mexico. The president and vice president were brutally put to death, and a reign of terror inaugurated that horrified the world. Such were the incidents that induced the Constitutionalist movement of today, a movement, that in reality, is naught save a continuation of the revolution of 1910, a movement that demands government by the governed.

While certain of the governors of states, and a majority of the military commanders accepted Huerta in the rôle that he had assumed, the governor of the state of Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza, refused to be cowed and boldly declared himself in opposition to the dictator and his so-called government, and with his state militia, commenced immediate operations for armed resistance. He was soon joined by others of prominence, governors of states, members of the national congress, officers of the army and professional men, as well as by thousands of artisans and wage-earners who saw in the movement of which he was spontaneously proclaimed the first chief, the only hope of restoration of constitutional government. Notwithstanding their inability to purchase arms and munitions of war in the United States, through much heroic sacrifice a respectable army soon was formed in the border states, which within twelve months, has now been so augmented and armed that it controls a respectable portion of the republic.

Under the leadership of Governor Carranza, the Constitutionalist forces now occupy Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Durango, most

of Coahuila, Tamaulipas, most of Nuevo Leon, northern Zacatecas and a part of San Luis Potosi. Added to this, they control various parts of Guerrero, Michoacan, Hidalgo, Vera Cruz, Puebla and Morelos. Yet the men who have accomplished this military feat are artfully called bandits by those whose personal interests would be best served by the continuance of the Huerta régime. Bandits they may be, according to some advanced standard of military ethics of which I am ignorant; but if they are bandits, then I presume their accusers consider themselves fortified by the attitude of the British press, which, during the war for independence, so vociferously denounced Admiral John Paul Jones as a pirate, and three-quarters of a century later, described General Grant as a heartless butcher.

The average foreigner in discussing Mexico will tell you that the country needs the mailed fist to govern it, because, he will say, that in such quality of government lies the sole safeguard of life and property. That was why the mailed fist of Diaz made him popular among the foreign concessionaires and the favorites who surrounded him—the group that finally sapped his imperious will and made him their plaything. It was a government of this character that prevented the people from regaining the lands taken from them through fraudulent and corrupt means; that ever protected him who was willing to pay, in one way or another, for protection. Therefore, many foreigners at this time, overlooking entirely the Mexican point of view, and the moral issues involved, are disposed to favor any man who is “strong” enough to impose a peace that will admit a resumption of their profitable industrial operations. But the government of the mailed fist or the iron hand can never impose a permanent peace. Such a peace can be secured only through a proper adjustment of political, economic and social conditions. To that adjustment the reactionary element in Mexico is opposed, but the Constitutionalist party is intent on making it effective by armed force.

The real interests of foreigners, as well as those of Mexicans, can only be conserved by means of reforms calculated to promote the general welfare of the masses, and by maintaining an equilibrium between capital and labor. It would seem but natural, therefore, that foreigners, if they seek peace, should contribute towards the development of conditions that would insure a peace that would be permanent.

The purposes of the Constitutionalist movement, which seek to bring about a permanent peace in Mexico, are better defined than were the motives of the revolution of 1910. These purposes contemplate, not only the reestablishment of constitutional government, but the reformation of the constitution itself and a revision of the laws made under it, to meet, by practical means, the plain requirements of the situation. In sustaining this movement, which has now reached the dignity of a civil war, Governor Carranza has the support of a vast majority of the agricultural population, who have demonstrated a patriotic readiness, even eagerness, to sacrifice their lives and fortunes for the common good.

While the soldiers of the Huerta forces are unwilling conscripts, taken on the streets, or from the jails of the cities, those in the Constitutionalist ranks are volunteers, pure and simple, intent on fighting for principle rather than for pay. According to the latest advices by the intelligence office of the Constitutionalists, Huerta has but 55,000 men available for real service, despite his boast that he has 205,000 under arms. Carranza has not less than 50,000 well-armed officers and men in the northern states alone, and can count on as many more in the south, as soon as they can be better equipped. The desperate fighting at Torreon and vicinity is but typical of the intensity of purpose with which the Constitutionalists are animated. Their attacks against fortifications considered impregnable, and the desperate and successful assaults of their infantry, against a withering fire of artillery, serve to indicate their devotion to a cause which they believe merits the notice of all Americans who stand for law and liberty.

I have not overlooked, however, the fact that the Constitutionalists have been charged by the press with many acts of violence and brigandage, of executing prisoners of war, of plundering captured cities, and the like. In discussing this matter I need only to allude to General Sherman's remark that "War is hell." But in reference to the charges so recklessly hurled against our troops, I desire to make a plea by way of confession and avoidance. While it is true that violence has been employed and houses sometimes sacked, though never to the extent charged, it is also true that those who have suffered were previously engaged in giving aid to the enemy. General Sherman and General Sheridan did not hesitate

to burn and pillage in their respective marches through Georgia to the sea, and through the valley of the Shenandoah. Throughout the enemy's country, at that time, railroads, warehouses, residences, buildings of all sorts and their contents, were ruthlessly destroyed, banks looted, livestock driven off for the use of the army, and the inhabitants, if not more harshly dealt with, left without even the bare necessities of life. It is true that certain captured officers have been shot by our forces as well as a class of deserters known as "red flaggers;" but these officers were among those who participated in the treason of February 9, 1913, and received the punishment imposed by law, in the precise manner as treason under similar circumstances is punishable in the United States. In respect to the execution of the "red flaggers," I have only to recall the hanging of fifty deserters from the American army, at San Angel, Mexico, in September, 1847, and the lashing and branding of some fifteen more, at the same place, by order of General Scott. Also, I might refer among other incidents, to the hanging of twenty-two prisoners of a federal regiment alleged to be deserters, by order of the famous General George E. Pickett in 1863. I merely mention these historical references to show that incidents of this character are not confined to the present struggle in Mexico. War necessitates stern and sometimes cruel measures.

In lieu of seizing the property of the inhabitants for the use of their forces, the Constitutionalist commanders pay for such in local currency redeemable hereafter in gold equivalent, and at present accepted by merchants and banks at twenty-eight cents to the gold dollar. It is also accepted by the authorities in payment of taxes of all kinds, thus greatly lessening the burdens of the people which they continue so cheerfully to bear. Meanwhile, the bullion derived from export duties on the precious metals is being coined into pesos, and also placed in circulation.

It is well to note that throughout the territory occupied by the Constitutionalist forces, excepting where active military operations are in progress, the people are pursuing their usual avocations; the fields are tilled; the mines are being worked; factories are in operation, and merchants are buying and selling as in time of peace. This is notably so in Sonora, where no semblance of the Huerta régime exists, save for a small garrison at the port of Guaymas, protected

by strong fortifications and by warships in the harbor. Almost similar conditions prevail in Sinaloa and will very soon be extended to Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

Contrary to current reports that certain of the estates belonging to the great landowners have been confiscated by the Constitutionalist authorities, the fact is that no such action has been taken, though, as a military measure some of them have been provisionally seized and the proceeds devoted to the maintenance of the troops, and towards aiding the poor. The Constitutionalist program does not contemplate summary confiscation or partition of estates of this character, such as for instance the Terrazas holdings in Chihuahua. Questions of such gravity, directly involved with the great agrarian problem, the first chief in its must, upon restoration of the Constitutional order, be submitted to the Congress for determination. In respect to the attitude of the Constitutionalist party towards concessions, it is safe to say that when such have been granted in strict accordance with the law, and when all the requirements of the latter have been fulfilled by the interested parties, their rights will be respected; but when concessions are, however, tainted with fraud or corruption, then it is equally safe to say that their legality will be tested.

It may not be improper for me to refer at this time to the relations between Americans and natives in Mexico. Some of the press would have the public believe that there exists a sentiment of underlying hostility towards Americans, and that in consequence, many of them have been killed and their property destroyed or stolen. This is untrue. Throughout the country Americans are held in higher esteem than any other class of foreigners, and the laborer will invariably seek employment from them rather than from Europeans, not because they pay higher wages, but because of their reputation for fair treatment; and I venture to assert, on the highest authority, that since this war began, not one American citizen has lost his life because of his nationality. Some have been killed in personal quarrels and bar room brawls, such as take place daily in New York, for instance; some have been killed because of their presence in the line of fire during engagements, and some have been murdered by thieves. But, I repeat that no persons have been killed because they were Americans. The Constitutionalist, I may add, entertain a deep appreciation of the kindly sentiments that their cause



has awakened among the thoughtful people of the United States to whom treason was ever odious, and to whom constitutional rights are so dear. We appreciate, too, the spirit of fairness that led the President to raise the embargo on the exportation of arms and munitions of war, and if we have not demonstrated our gratitude, it is because there has been no fitting opportunity to do so. Nor have we Mexicans forgotten Seward and the degree of moral support he gave President Juarez in his noble struggle for democratic government against the reactionaries who sought to impose on Mexico a monarchy, the same reactionaries who now so strenuously seek to sustain Huerta in his unbridled career of usurpation.

There has been much talk of intervention, but there is no more need of it in Mexico today than there was half a century ago in the United States. We are confronted with a great problem now, as you were then. Our problem must be settled by Mexicans, as yours was settled by Americans. I regard suggestions favoring intervention as emanating mostly from those interested in the restoration of dividends rather than in the restoration of peace. Such was certainly the case in 1862-1863. And I am happy in the belief that the majority of public men are of the same opinion. When peace comes, the government of Mexico, following the example of the United States, will meet all obligations imposed on it by international law in respect to losses suffered by foreign citizens and subjects. To this, the Constitutionalist government has already pledged itself.

As the war progresses and as the Constitutionalist forces, increasing both in number and power each day, press their campaign upon the city of Mexico, there will be heard suggestions of compromise, the selection of some personage not identified with either side, to assume the presidency pending an election, or maybe, the establishment of a government by commission or *junta de gobierno*, or some other suggestion discreetly calculated to delay or avoid the establishment of the headquarters of the victorious army in the national palace as a prelude to the restoration of constitutional government. Indeed, the influence of certain of the European powers may be exerted to this end. Save in the days of Juarez, practically every revolutionary movement in Mexico intended to wrest the control of the government from the clergy and the aristocracy has, with victory in its grasp, failed in purpose because of some cunningly devised compromise. Such was the cause of Madero's downfall—

his temporizing with the reactionaries—by which bitter experience the Constitutionalist cause will nevertheless profit. Therefore, no suggestion of compromise with an element identified with the treacherous overthrow of constitutional government, can or will under any circumstances be considered. That element must be crushed, and those who have directed its destinies must answer before the law for their crimes. Such is the unalterable determination of the first chief of the Constitutionalist forces, in which he is supported to a man by his subordinates, and the present war will not, therefore, cease until this end, of such transcendental importance to the future, is assured. Then there must be a period of national purification and house cleaning, to be followed by the election of members of a new congress, which body upon its organization will, in accordance with the constitution, fix the date for the election for a president and vice-president. This done, and the successful candidates inaugurated, constitutional government will once more reign supreme. But, meanwhile, Mexico will be governed in a manner prescribed by the first chief of the Constitutionalist forces, and not by a compromise provisional government like that of De la Barra. No compromise means as much to the people today as the old cry of “liberty and constitution.”

NOTE. *This paper was submitted to the Academy April 3, 1914.*